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Some Republican Candidates Have Been Less than Candid

No one, we hope, will refuse to vote for James J. Matthews or Frederic W. Barnes solely because of their connections with the John Birch Society.

But we believe that both these Republican candidates have handled the problem — it is, for them, a problem — of their affiliation in such a way as to make the voters wary.

On Saturday, Oct. 5, Matthews said for the first time publicly that he was a member of the John Birch Society. He said then that he was "proud" to be a member. Presumably, unless certain members of Arlingtonians for a Better County (ABC) had not said he was a member, Matthews would have said nothing about his membership or his pride in it. He has not listed his membership in his campaign literature nor in his advertising thus far.

The Republican County Board candidate, in short, acted for a long time as though he would prefer his membership to be kept a secret. On Oct. 3, for instance, a SUN reporter asked him if he were a member; he refused to say.

Matthews has also said "I do not endorse all and every facet of statements and actions by some members of this group." It would be interesting to know what.

In reply to ABC statements that he is a Birch member, Matthews has said that "among the ringleaders of this ABC group are some whose members appear as members of the executive board of the National Lawyers Guild."

As yet, however, he has not seen fit to say which ABCers, if any, are members of the guild. He has asked this newspaper several times to print his charge, but has refused to name names. Until he does, we can only assume the charges are baseless or potentially libelous.

House of Delegates candidate Barnes also has shied away from public comment on his Birch affiliation. He said nothing publicly about it until yesterday.

As we say, we should be either of these or should be either rejected or accepted solely because of the Birch Society. On the other hand, their beliefs and their affiliations are important in helping the voters to make up their minds. We believe they have been less than candid.

The Birch Society is a controversial matter, because of both its membership and the writings of its founder and leader, Robert Welch.

Some of the people on the society's "National Council" include T. Coleman Andrews, Spruille Braden, Clarence Manion and Col. Laurence E. Hunter. Some of its "Committee of Endorsers" include Billy James, Iargis, Rep. Edgar W. Hiestand and Brig. Gen. Bonner Fellers.

It is fairly clear at least to us, what the founder and leader of the Birch Society believes. Here are some quotations from his two chief works, "The Executive" and "The Politician."

"And democracy, of course, in government or organization, as the Greeks and Romans both found out, and as I believe every man in this room clearly recognizes—democracy is in itself a deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery, and perennial fraud..."

"Allen Dulles is the most protected and most powerful supporter of Communism in the world."

"He (former President Eisenhower) is demonstrably one of the most insincere, most deceptive and hypocritical human beings that ever lived."

"Our Supreme Court is now so strongly and completely anti-American that it shatters its own reputation and rips gaping holes in our Constitution, in order to favor Communist persons."

"For many years and after a lot of study I have come to believe (John Foster) Dulles is a Communist."

The Birch Society, true to its founder's beliefs, is an undemocratic organization. There are no elections of officers, no debate on what stands the society will take. Welch himself provides both thought and direction.

Since it became known that Matthews was a member, several writers of letters to the SUN have referred to the state of California Senate's Un-American Activities Subcommittee report on the society.

This subcommittee has no legal authority as far as Communism is concerned. The Supreme Court has decided that seditious activities are the concern of the federal government only.

But for what it's worth, the subcommittee concluded the Birch Society was neither subversive nor anti-Semitic. It also found that the society had, admittedly, adopted "many Communist techniques." It also found that the society had "unstable" members, but declared the majority of its members were particularly concerned "about the advances of the world Communist movement and the advances of Communist subversion in this country."

Sen. Barry Goldwater was quoted as saying this about the society: "I think that those who denounce the Birchers will regret it. I've condemned Bob Welch — his ideas are ridiculous — but that's as far as I will go!"

How far would Mr. Matthews and Mr. Barnes go?